

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. ET, Thursday, April 13, 2000.

**ADVANCE MONTHLY RETAIL SALES
March 2000**

Intention to Revise Retail Estimates: Monthly retail sales estimates will be revised based on the results of the 1998 Annual Retail Trade Survey. Unadjusted estimates will be revised for the months of January 1993 through March 2000, while corresponding adjusted data will be revised for January 1990 through March 2000. Revised data are scheduled for release the week of April 24.

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail sales for March, adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$269.2 billion, an increase of 0.4 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the previous month and up 10.5 percent ($\pm 0.9\%$) from March 1999. Total sales for the January through March period were up 10.5 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) from the same period a year ago. The January to February 2000 percent change was revised from +1.1 percent ($\pm 0.7\%$) to +1.8 percent ($\pm 0.3\%$).

Durable goods decreased 0.9 percent ($\pm 1.4\%$) from February but were 10.7 percent above last year. Automotive sales were up 11.1 percent from March a year ago, while furniture sales were up 9.5 percent from last year.

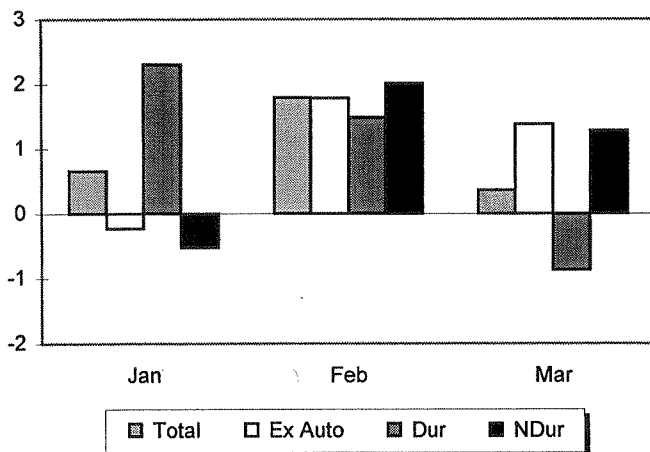
Nondurable goods increased 1.3 percent ($\pm 0.6\%$) from February and were up 10.4 percent from March 1999. Gasoline sales were up 31.2 percent from March a year ago, while eating and drinking sales were up 10.7 percent from last year.

The advance estimates are based on a small subsample of the Bureau's full retail sales sample. Estimates from the advance and the subsequent full survey can differ because of the earlier reporting in the advance and because of sampling variability present in both surveys.

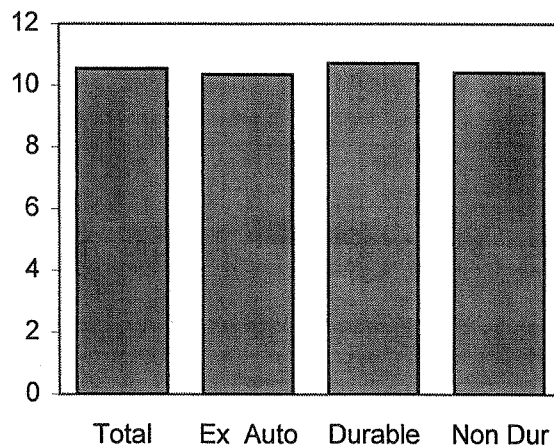
Percent Change in Retail Sales

(Data adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes)

From Previous Month



From Previous Year



The Advance Monthly Retail Sales Report for April is scheduled to be released May 11, 2000 at 8:30 a.m.

Address inquiries concerning this report to Scott Scheleur, Service Sector Statistics Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC 20233. Telephone: 301-457-2713 or 301-457-2666.

This report is available the day of issue through the Department of Commerce's online Economic Bulletin Board. For information call 202-482-1986. The data are also available on the Internet - <http://www.census.gov/svsd/www/advtable.html>.

Table 1. Estimated Monthly Retail Sales, By Kind of Business

(In Millions of Dollars and Annual Percent Change)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted							Adjusted ¹				
		3 month total		2000			1999		2000			1999	
		2000	Change from 1999	Mar. ² (a)	Feb. (p)	Jan. (r)	Mar.	Feb.	Mar. ² (a)	Feb. (p)	Jan. (r)	Mar. (r)	Feb. (r)
	Retail trade, total.....	747,106	12.1	271,842	245,188	230,076	244,435	212,492	269,226	268,249	263,544	243,545	242,173
	Total (excl. auto dealers).....	548,514	11.0	197,877	178,671	171,966	178,427	157,085	202,034	199,293	195,800	183,088	181,932
	Durable goods, total.....	318,062	13.5	117,430	105,705	94,927	105,523	89,961	113,176	114,169	112,504	102,217	102,061
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.	39,250	5.9	15,415	12,312	11,523	14,526	11,665	15,974	15,384	15,624	15,031	15,378
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores..	(*)	(*)	(*)	9,844	9,231	11,150	8,919	(*)	12,049	12,259	11,412	11,494
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	998	1,033	1,206	1,000	(*)	1,271	1,258	1,314	1,318
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	198,592	15.2	73,965	66,517	58,110	66,008	55,407	67,192	68,956	67,744	60,457	60,241
551,2,5, 6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	189,053	15.5	70,389	63,471	55,193	62,759	52,707	63,700	65,502	64,328	57,262	57,042
551	Motor vehicle (franchised)....	(*)	(*)	(*)	54,421	47,732	53,855	45,269	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,046	2,917	3,249	2,700	(*)	3,454	3,416	3,195	3,199
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	41,374	12.0	14,262	13,648	13,464	13,006	11,773	14,673	14,729	14,477	13,400	13,224
571	Furniture and home furnishings.	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,283	5,999	6,155	5,461	(*)	6,800	6,718	6,242	6,164
5722,31,4	Household appliance, radio, TV and computer stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,442	6,565	5,886	5,410	(*)	6,912	6,747	6,131	6,031
5722	Household appliance stores..	(*)	(*)	(*)	906	899	906	784	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods, total.....	429,044	11.1	154,412	139,483	135,149	138,912	122,531	156,050	154,080	151,040	141,328	140,112
53	General merchandise group stores.	84,541	7.9	31,377	27,488	25,676	29,160	25,028	33,364	33,142	32,971	31,365	31,039
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts)..	65,106	6.9	24,121	21,140	19,845	22,770	19,496	25,798	25,749	25,706	24,590	24,370
531	Dept. stores (in. leased depts) ³ ..	(*)	(*)	(*)	21,536	20,213	23,193	19,849	(*)	26,257	26,225	25,031	24,871
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,109	918	1,056	913	(*)	1,273	1,266	1,094	1,084
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,239	4,913	5,334	4,619	(*)	6,120	5,999	5,681	5,585
54	Food stores.....	114,166	5.5	39,880	36,766	37,520	37,689	34,138	39,737	39,557	38,764	37,906	37,807
541	Grocery stores.....	108,160	5.4	37,775	34,752	35,633	35,686	32,331	37,587	37,408	36,622	35,901	35,804
554	Gasoline service stations.....	48,968	29.0	17,958	15,850	15,160	13,594	11,833	18,324	17,611	16,496	13,971	13,617
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	28,663	5.9	11,333	9,162	8,168	10,587	8,449	11,980	11,714	11,329	11,154	11,081
561	Men's and boy's clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	741	767	818	701	(*)	948	926	939	918
562,3	Women's clothing, accessory stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,488	2,144	2,955	2,331	(*)	3,141	2,913	3,078	3,016
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,466	3,132	3,976	3,157	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,496	1,307	1,784	1,450	(*)	1,787	1,790	1,752	1,786
58	Eating and drinking places.....	72,943	11.0	26,108	23,843	22,992	23,329	21,169	25,697	25,284	25,155	23,213	23,288
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	30,468	7.9	10,594	9,966	9,908	9,982	9,081	10,366	10,149	10,204	9,672	9,589
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,061	2,003	2,040	1,848	(*)	2,374	2,316	2,191	2,197
5961	Total mail order.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,441	7,412	6,888	5,779	(*)	8,204	8,101	6,694	6,712
53,56,57, 594	GAF ⁴	(*)	(*)	(*)	58,034	54,276	60,110	52,149	(*)	68,795	67,586	64,574	63,914

* Advance estimates are not available from the subsample panel for these kinds of business.

NA Not available. (a) Advance estimates. (p) Preliminary. (r) Revised.

(1) Data are concurrently adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes. Concurrent seasonal adjustment uses all available unadjusted estimates as input to the X-11 program and the factors derived from the program are used in calculating all seasonally adjusted data shown in this publication. Factors and explanatory material are contained in the Monthly Retail Trade Report, BR-00-02.

(2) Advance estimates are based on early reporting by a small subsample of the full survey panel. All other estimates are based on the full sample.

(3) Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

(4) GAF represents stores which specialize in department store types of merchandise (general merchandise, apparel, furniture, and miscellaneous shopping goods stores).

Note: Totals include data for kinds of business not shown separately.

Table 2. Percent Change in Estimated Monthly Retail Sales, by Kind of Business

(Adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes)

SIC code	Kind of business	Percent change ¹					
		Mar. 2000 Advance from --		Feb. 2000 Preliminary from --		Jan. 2000 through Mar. 2000 from --	
		Feb. 2000 (p)	Mar. 1999 (r)	Jan. 2000 (r)	Feb. 1999 (r)	Oct. 1999 through Dec. 1999	Jan. 1999 through Mar. 1999
	Retail trade, total	0.4	10.5	1.8	10.8	3.7	10.5
	Total (excl. automotive dealers)	1.4	10.3	1.8	9.5	3.1	9.6
	Durable goods, total	-0.9	10.7	1.5	11.9	4.8	11.6
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers	3.8	6.3	-1.5	0.0	0.4	3.8
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	-2.6	11.1	1.8	14.5	5.8	13.4
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	-2.8	11.2	1.8	14.8	5.9	13.7
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	-0.4	9.5	1.7	11.4	4.8	10.6
	Nondurable goods, total.....	1.3	10.4	2.0	10.0	2.9	9.7
53	General merchandise group stores.....	0.7	6.4	0.5	6.8	2.3	6.5
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased dept.).....	0.2	4.9	0.2	5.7	2.1	5.5
531	Dept. stores (in. leased dept.) ²	(NA)	(NA)	0.1	5.6	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	0.5	4.8	2.0	4.6	-0.6	4.4
541	Grocery stores.....	0.5	4.7	2.1	4.5	-0.9	4.2
554	Gasoline service stations.....	4.0	31.2	6.8	29.3	8.2	27.6
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	2.3	7.4	3.4	5.7	4.2	5.2
58	Eating and drinking places.....	1.6	10.7	0.5	8.6	2.9	9.6
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	2.1	7.2	-0.5	5.8	0.3	7.0

NA Not available. (p) Preliminary. (r) Revised.

(1) Percent change rounded to nearest tenth.

(2) Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

FIRST-CLASS MAIL
 POSTAGE & FEES PAID
 Bureau of the Census
 PERMIT NO. G-58

Official Business

Penalty for Private Use, \$300

Reliability of Data

The Advance estimates are based on a small subsample of the Bureau's full retail sales sample. Estimates from the Advance and the subsequent full survey can differ because of the earlier reporting in the Advance and because of sampling variability present in each survey. The margin of sampling error, as used on page 1, gives a range about the estimate which is a 90% confidence interval. If, for example, the trend estimate is +1.2% and the standard error is 0.9%, then the margin of sampling error is $\pm 1.65 \times 0.9\%$ or $\pm 1.5\%$, and the 90% confidence interval is -0.3% to +2.7%. If the interval contains 0, it is uncertain whether there was an increase or decrease. For monthly level, the coefficient of variation (CV) is given. The resulting confidence interval is the estimated value $\pm 1.65 \times CV \times$ (the estimated value).

Estimates of sampling variability are given in Table 3. They are based on two components. The first component is a measure of the average

difference between the Advance and the Preliminary estimates. The second reflects the variability of the Preliminary estimate. Additionally, both the Advance and the full survey are subject to nonsampling errors. Such errors can occur because of nonresponse, insufficient coverage of the universe of retail businesses, and response errors, among others. Precautionary steps are taken to minimize these errors, but their magnitude is not directly measured.

Preliminary estimates for the current month and final estimates for the previous month based on the full sample are published next month in the Monthly Retail Trade Report. This report will provide sales estimates in greater detail and additional measures of sampling variability. It will also present a description of revisions and the techniques used in developing the estimates, and an explanation of confidence intervals and sampling variability (Appendix B, Reliability of Data).

Table 3. Measures of Variability of and Revision to Advance Estimates for Level and Trend

SIC code	Kind of Business	Level of sales: Estimated CV ¹ for Current Mo. (x 100)	Trend (percent change): Estimated standard error ¹ for			Revision for month- to-month change ²	
			Current Mo. to Previous Mo.	Current Qtr. to Previous Qtr.	Current Mo. to Current Mo. Last Yr.	Average revision	Median absolute revision
	Retail trade, total	7.0	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.2	0.3
	Total (excl. auto dealers)	1.0	0.6	0.3	0.7	0.2	0.3
	Durable goods, total	1.4	0.9	0.6	1.1	0.2	0.5
52	Building materials group stores	3.5	1.9	1.1	2.7	-0.3	1.2
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	1.6	1.2	0.8	1.5	0.2	0.5
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and misc. automotive dealers.....	1.8	1.3	0.9	1.6	0.4	0.6
57	Furniture, home furn, and equipment stores	2.0	1.4	0.7	1.8	0.3	0.7
	Nondurable goods, total	1.1	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.3
53	General merch. group, total.....	0.6	0.6	0.2	0.6	0.0	0.2
531	Dept. stores (ex. leased depts.)...	0.4	0.5	0.1	0.4	-0.1	0.2
54	Food stores.....	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.0	0.5
541	Grocery stores	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.0	0.6
554	Gasoline service stations	2.2	1.2	1.4	1.4	0.8	1.1
56	Apparel and accessory stores	1.9	1.5	0.6	1.6	-0.2	0.8
58	Eating and drinking places	5.1	1.0	0.9	2.2	0.5	0.5
591	Drug and proprietary stores	1.7	0.8	0.4	1.2	-0.2	0.4



(1) The coefficients of variation (CVs) for level of sales and the standard errors for trends are medians based on estimates for the preceding 12 months.

(2) These columns measure the difference between the Advance/Preliminary ratio and the Preliminary/Final ratio estimates -- i.e., the difference between estimates of trend for the same pair of data months. The revisions are based on the latest 12 months of data.